

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization  
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date  
27 June 2002 (27.06.2002)

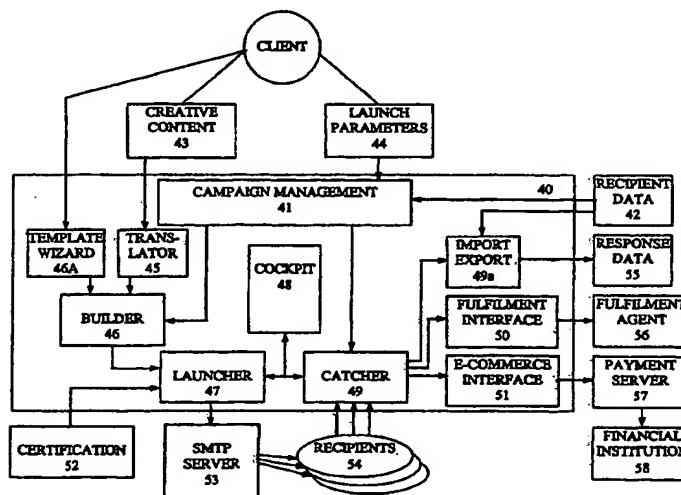
PCT

(10) International Publication Number  
WO 02/50705 A1

- (51) International Patent Classification<sup>7</sup>: G06F 17/30 (74) Agent: FISHER ADAMS KELLY; LEVEL 13, AMP PLACE, 10 EAGLE STREET, BRISBANE, Queensland 4000 (AU).
- (21) International Application Number: PCT/AU01/01659
- (22) International Filing Date:  
21 December 2001 (21.12.2001)
- (25) Filing Language: English
- (26) Publication Language: English
- (30) Priority Data:  
PR 2244 21 December 2000 (21.12.2000) AU
- (71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): U-MARKETING PTY LTD [AU/AU]; Suite 1, Level 3, 200 Creek Street, BRISBANE, Queensland 4064 (AU).
- (72) Inventors; and
- (75) Inventors/Applicants (for US only): OXLEY, Richard [AU/AU]; 3 Eucalytus Place, CALOUNDRA, Queensland 4551 (AU). BEST, Philip [AU/AU]; 20 Plumer Street, SHERWOOD, Queensland 4075 (AU).
- (81) Designated States (national): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EC, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NO, NZ, OM, PH, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZM, ZW.
- (84) Designated States (regional): ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE, TR), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).
- Published:  
— with international search report

[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM



(57) Abstract: An electronic document distribution system including a builder module that integrates creative content with a document template to produce a master electronic document that is transmitted to a recipient list by a launcher module in accordance with delivery and scheduling details. A catcher module receives and processes automatic receipts from recipients of the electronic document. The system has application in bulk email campaigns for marketing of goods and services. It may also include a fulfilment interface that tracks fulfilment of orders received from recipients and an e-commerce interface that intermediates financial transactions for payment of ordered goods or services.

WO 02/50705 A1



*For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.*

## TITLE

## ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

## FIELD OF THE INVENTION

5           This invention relates to the delivery of electronic documents via e-mail or equivalent arrangements for presentation of information particularly, although not exclusively, for distribution of electronic documents which comprise promotional presentations for the purpose of direct marketing of goods and/or services to e-mail recipients. The  
10       invention further relates to a system for managing the compilation, scheduling, controlling, distribution, commercial transactions and statistical data capture of electronic documents.

## BACKGROUND TO THE INVENTION

15           Existing arrangements for the delivery of documents in electronic form typically rely on the attachment mechanisms provided by conventional e-mail client software or e-mail web browsers. In some cases the attachments are executable files arranged such that they can be executed on the computer system of the e-mail recipient in order to  
20       present, for example, multi-media content. Desired recipients of e-mail may often only be readily accessible via the public global communications network known as the Internet or World Wide Web.

          However, entities sending electronic documents via e-mail do not have a convenient way of determining whether the intended recipient has  
25       opened the electronic document, although some e-mail servers are able to indicate that the e-mail was delivered to the post office, and/or downloaded from the e-mail server by the recipient. Further difficulties arise when the recipient's computer system or e-mail device employs an incompatible operating system and/or does not have necessary software  
30       application installed in order to open the electronic document. This is especially an issue if the document includes content other than plain text, such as an audio-visual animated presentation that requires a media player compatible with the format of the multimedia content.

          Existing industry standard e-mail clients and servers, such as  
35       "Outlook" produced by Microsoft Corporation, "Communicator" produced by Netscape, and "Eudora" produced by Qualcomm Incorporated, can warn recipients of unsolicited e-mail messages of the potential risks of executable files attached to e-mail messages. This warning arises from

well-publicised incidences of e-mail attachments including renegade executable code (colloquially referred to as "computer viruses") with the potential to disable or damage a recipient's computer system upon execution of the attachment.

5 Many business entities that utilise the Internet for communications purposes have installed security arrangements, such as firewalls, as part of their connection to the Internet to protect their computers from computer virus attack. Such firewalls usually prevent transmission of e-mail  
10 messages with attachments in the form of executable files to computers internal to the organisation, particularly when the e-mail is sent by an unknown or unidentifiable source. Furthermore, the possibility of interception of, and tampering, with e-mail messages and attached files during transmission via the Internet is also of concern to both private and business users of e-mail.

#### 15 OBJECT OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to provide an electronic document and a system for the distribution of electronic documents that ameliorates or overcomes some of the problems associated with the prior  
20 art.

It is another object of the present invention to provide an electronic document wherein the recipient can identify, with a degree of certainty, the origin of the document and wherein unauthorised tampering with the content of the document can be identified and brought to the attention of  
25 the recipient by the client's e-mail client application.

It is yet another object of the present invention to provide a method and arrangement for the delivery of an electronic document wherein a facility is provided for automatically sending statistical information once the recipient has viewed the presentation.

30 It is a still further object of the present invention to provide a system for the distribution of electronic documents as part of a marketing campaign, which provides a facility for integration with electronic commerce order and payment processing systems.

35 It is a still further object of the present invention to provide a system for the establishment, maintenance and scheduling of marketing, or information, campaigns.

Further objects will be evident from the description.

**DISCLOSURE OF THE INVENTION**

In one form, although it need not be the only or indeed the broadest form, the invention resides in a system for the distribution of an electronic document containing a presentation to a plurality of desired recipients via an electronic mail service, the system comprising:

- (a) a management module that manages master electronic documents, including configuration maintenance;
- (b) a builder module that integrates creative content with a document template to produce the master electronic document;
- (c) a launcher module that merges recipient data with the master electronic document and initiates transmission of the electronic document to each desired recipient in accordance with delivery and scheduling details provided by the management module; and
- (d) a catcher module that receives and processes automatic receipts from recipients of the electronic document.

Suitably the management module performs maintenance of e-commerce configuration details, and merging of delivery, scheduling, and e-commerce details.

The recipient data is suitably stored in a database. Preferably the recipient data includes address information and other personalised information relevant to the recipient and an associated campaign. To enable each response to be clearly traced to the recipient address, a global unique identifier for each recipient is created automatically by the system.

Preferably the delivery details include an anticipated delivery date, and an expiry date beyond which the presentation may be limited to an explanation to the recipient that the campaign has lapsed, and a Close Date after which all responses for the launch are discarded.

The creative content may include any one or more of text objects, image objects, sound objects, audio-visual objects or animation objects.

Preferably the launcher module forwards each electronic document created for each recipient to a communications server for transmission to recipients determined by a recipient list.

The template or framework for the electronic document includes a header portion for holding address information of the recipient and a body portion with a structure as set out below.

The launcher module may suitably append an electronic digital signature to the master electronic document.

In another form, the invention resides in an electronic document, arranged for transmission from a sender according to address information in a header portion of the document, said document structured such that the following sections are included within a body portion of the document:

- 5 (a) a computing platform independent script section for controlling presentation of content of the electronic document and including a subsection for automatically returning a receipt or response;
- (b) a mark-up language section for providing links to subsections of encoded content within the document; and
- 10 (c) a content section including a plurality of subsections each encoded in accordance with a multipurpose communications protocol supported by the electronic mail service;

wherein automated presentation of content to the recipient upon opening the electronic document is controlled by a client application associated with the electronic mail service.

The script section of the electronic document may include further subsections for:

- (i) collecting feedback information provided manually by the recipient in reply to the content presented;
- 20 (ii) collecting statistical feedback information, collected automatically, of timing and/or other event information;
- (iii) encrypting the response information and returning the encrypted response to the sender in the receipt; and/or
- (iv) implementing campaign expiry dates.

25 The script subsection for automatically returning a receipt suitably creates and places the receipt in an out box or equivalent accessible via the recipient's client application.

The receipt, which is addressed to a receiver designated by the sender, or their agent, most preferably contains a variable allowing the recipient to opt out of further communications with the sender.

30 The receipt may optionally contain an e-mail address variable to instruct the system that another electronic document/presentation is required to be sent to a friend or associate of the recipient at the e-mail address entered by the recipient.

35 The mark-up language section of the electronic document preferably includes a canvas page section that establishes a style for the presentation.

The mark-up language section of the electronic document may further include:

- (i) a reply form page for collecting feedback information from the recipient;
- 5 (ii) a fulfilment order page for taking orders for goods and/or services; and/or
- (iii) an electronic commerce page for facilitating electronic payments offered in relation to the orders.

10 If required, the body portion of the electronic document further includes a plain text section for use with sub-functional client application software, for example an electronic mail client lacking mark-up language support.

The client application may be an e-mail client or a web browser client application.

15 In yet another form the invention resides in a method for distributing an electronic document containing a presentation to a plurality of desired recipients, said method including the steps of:

- (a) obtaining delivery and scheduling details for the distribution of the electronic documents, together with data about the desired recipients;
- 20 (b) integrating creative content with a document template to produce a master electronic document;
- (c) merging the recipient data with the master electronic document and initiating transmission of the electronic document to each desired recipient in accordance with the delivery and scheduling details; and
- 25 (d) receiving and processing automatic receipts from recipients of the electronic document.

Preferably the method further includes the step of merging product information with the document template to produce the master electronic document.

30 In still another form the invention resides in an electronic document sending apparatus for transmitting an electronic document of the type defined above to a desired recipient, said apparatus including:  
a launcher module for merging address information of the desired recipient with a master electronic document containing creative content to form the  
35 electronic document and for initiating transmission of the electronic document to the recipient via an electronic mail service.

Suitably the launcher module also merges product information and an electronic digital signature.

Throughout this specification the expression "electronic document" shall be understood as not limited to containing solely textual matter, but to include animations, graphics and audiovisual and similar multi-media content.

5

#### BRIEF DETAILS OF THE DRAWINGS

To assist in understanding the invention preferred embodiments will now be described with reference to the following figures in which:

10

FIG. 1 is a concept diagram of an electronic commerce, or direct e-mail marketing system of a preferred embodiment of the distribution system of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is an example of a template for a preferred embodiment of the electronic document of the present invention;

15

FIG. 3 is a schematic diagram showing modules of the direct e-mail marketing system of FIG. 1;

FIG. 4 is a context diagram reflecting the functional inter-relationships between the modules of the e-mail marketing system of the preferred embodiment;

20

FIG. 5 is an example user interface for maintaining campaign details;

FIG. 6 is an example user interface for entering fulfilment e-mail details;

25

FIG. 7 is an example user interface for entering details into an electronic document;

FIG. 8 is the example user interface of FIG. 7 subsequent to review, approval and authorisation procedures;

FIG. 9 is a logical data model for the direct e-mail marketing system; and

30

FIG. 10 is an example user interface for entering campaign launch parameters into the system.

#### DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In the drawing figures, like reference numerals refer to like parts. The invention is described in relation to a preferred direct e-mail marketing system that utilises an electronic mail service, for example SMTP with MIME extensions available via the Internet, as a communications channel. The system uses e-mail push technology, wherein content rich marketing

35



information is delivered to desired recipients in an electronic document which appears to be a conventional e-mail message. In the accompanying figures, electronic documents are sometimes identified using the applicant's trade mark "Jabmail".

5 Referring to FIG 1, the direct e-mail marketing concept 10 of the preferred embodiment involves a client 11 that wishes to promote certain goods or services to its customers or recipients identified as potential customers. This client representative is responsible for entering campaign and goods and services (order) data via a user interface to establish the  
10 campaign. The system provides a template 12 for creating a master electronic document according to the client's requirements for a marketing campaign, including details such as identification of the campaign, its start date, duration and the particular goods or services involved. Custom creative content 13, including digital artwork and audio-visual  
15 presentations, may be provided by a creative studio 14 such as the client's advertising agency.

Content edited in the template 12 by the client or the creative content 13 are combined by a builder function 15 to form the master electronic document. The master document is also subject to  
20 authorisation and certification processes 16, which includes approval of a recipient list obtained from a client database 17. An independent certification authority may also be involved to certify the client's identity for security purposes. Subsequent to these processes, a launcher function 18 merges the authorised master electronic document with address  
25 information for the approved recipients 19. The electronic document is then sent to each recipient via the Internet, commencing on the campaign start date.

The electronic document of the embodiment, which is described in more detail in relation to FIG. 2, includes script for interpretation by each  
30 recipient's e-mail client application. The script causes a receipt 22A to be returned to a pre-determined address separate from the sender. The address may be that of the client or an agent of the client which provides a receipt catcher function 20. In the embodiment, the receipt is generated subsequent to the electronic document being opened by an individual  
35 recipient.

The receipt may merely verify that the recipient has viewed the electronic document and opted out of any further communications with the client. Alternatively, the receipt may contain responses from the client to

questions posed by the client or to an offer of further information from the client. The catcher function 20 processes all such responses, including flagging any unformatted messages for later manual consideration. Marketing statistics can thus be conveniently produced from receipts gathered by the catcher, in accordance with requirements specified by the client during the building function.

In order to monitor progress of the marketing campaign, a cockpit function 21 is provided by the system. This includes progress with the transmission of electronic documents to recipients by the launcher function 18 and the nature of receipts received by the catcher function 20, including statistical analysis of receipts 22A for the client 11. The cockpit function can also be used to update the recipient list 17 regarding those customers who have opted out of further communications. The system is capable of launching multiple e-mail campaigns, and the cockpit function 21 can be configured to monitor progress with each campaign.

In an extended form, the system of the embodiment may be interfaced with third party electronic commerce payment and fulfilment systems, allowing the processing of orders and accompanying credit card details 22B communicated in responses from recipients. The interface may facilitate verification of payment details with an electronic commerce payment server function provided by a bank 23 or other financial institution. The interface may also facilitate order entry, shipping and proof of delivery functions provided by fulfilment agent systems 24, 25.

The electronic document of the preferred embodiment has a structure that facilitates the delivery of non-text content, such as images, video and animations, within an e-mail envelope and provides for automated receipting. The structure has a conventional header portion and a body portion. The body portion of the electronic document allows clients to insert customised content and questions for the collection of marketing data relating to the particular marketing campaign. When upon receipt, the electronic document is opened in a suitable e-mail client application, the content is automatically and immediately presented to the recipient within the application. A suitable e-mail client application, in the context of the embodiment, is at least markup language (e.g. HTML) and computer platform independent script (e.g. Javascript) compatible.

The template for the electronic document 30 includes, as illustrated in FIG. 2, a body portion with a platform independent script section 31 for controlling presentation of the content of the electronic document, a

markup language section 32 for linking to encoded objects in a content section 33. In the embodiment, the markup language section 32 includes at least one hypertext markup language (HTML) page that is associated with Javascript in the script section 32. The Javascript is used to paint the contents of each page of the electronic document when opened. The HTML page includes links to content objects that have each been encoded with a multipurpose communications protocol supported by the electronic mail service, such as MIME.

Each template may include multiple HTML pages together with a non-HTML support page that incorporates a link to a URL where content (corresponding to that of the electronic document) can be alternatively sourced, via the Internet using a browser application. The non-HTML support page allows for instances where the recipient's e-mail client does not support the markup language or scripting. The HTML pages provided in the template include four basic types, as follows:

- (i) canvas pages which establish a style for the presentation of content;
- (ii) marketing information feedback form pages for collecting feedback information from the recipient;
- (iii) fulfilment order pages for taking orders for goods and/or services; and/or
- (iv) electronic commerce pages for accepting payments offered in relation to the orders.

Each page type may include links to MIME encoded content objects, as required. The first canvas page typically contains a greeting to the particular recipient with personalised content sourced from the recipient list 17. The pages that follow the greeting page are subject to the content of the particular presentation, whether for marketing or information purposes.

The script section 31 at the beginning of the template, includes JavaScript which controls presentation of the content, including the sunset (expiry) date and manages recipient interaction. A subsection of the script is provided for automatically returning a receipt to the sender. The receipt at least includes a variable allowing the recipient to either opt in, or opt out, of further communications with the sender. The receipt may further include fields for reply type (in this case 01), read receipt, date and time opened (local to the recipient), interaction time with the content, number of pages viewed.

The receipt is created, addressed to the sender (or the sender's agent) and placed in the "out box" of the recipient's e-mail client application. The script section typically includes a mechanism for detecting the particular e-mail client application. The script section of the electronic document may further include subsections for:

- (i) collecting feedback information from the recipient in reply to the content presented;
- (ii) encrypting the response information and returning the encrypted response in the receipt; and/or
- (iii) collecting electronic order and purchase confirmation information

The feedback form page can include additional specific questions that are formulated by the client.

The functional modules of the electronic document distribution system 40 of the embodiment are now described with reference to FIG. 3. The system includes a management module 41 for managing the campaign that includes the preparation of a list of desired recipients from recipient data sourced from a database 42 loaded to the recipient list via the catcher. The database in the example comprises data relating to the client's customers. The client establishes campaign details, perhaps with the assistance of an advertising agency, including the production of creative content 43 for the campaign and parameters 44 for the launch.

The creative content may be created using multimedia authoring software, such as "Flash" produced by Macromedia, Inc., which generates audio-visual files in the shockwave format. This content is provided to a translator module 45 that has functions enabling the translation of the content into a form suitable for integration into a master electronic document. The builder module 46 builds the master electronic document, using a template wizard function 46A to interact with the client, and integrates content objects provided by the translator module 45.

Once built and scheduled for launch, the master document is merged with recipient data in the launcher module 47, including respective e-mail addresses supplied by the management module via the Catcher, from the recipient database 42. The documents are then sent to the desired recipients, commencing on a date specified amongst launch parameters 44 provided by the client. The launcher may also function in conjunction with a certification authority in order to apply desired sender

authentication and tamper proofing measures to the distributed electronic documents.

5 The cockpit module 48 facilitates live monitoring of the launch progress and incoming responses, and includes a graphical user interface for presentation of relevant statistical data.

10 The catcher module 49 is a central device for receiving receipts from recipients in reply to the e-mailed electronic documents. The catcher module processes every e-mailed receipt or other response received, and invokes other functions including fulfilment to a fulfilment agent 56 via fulfilment interface module 50 and e-commerce via e-commerce interface module 51 through a payment server 57 to financial institution 58. The catcher module is also associated with an import/export module 49A that facilitates the export of response data 52 in client requested formats and the import of recipient data from database 42. The particular functional aspects of each module of the embodiment will now be discussed in more detail below.

20 A context diagram reflecting the functional inter-relationships between the modules is illustrated in FIG. 4. This diagram reflects a second embodiment of the system that may be employed by an entity such as an advertising agency or marketing organisation that provides services to multiple clients. The second embodiment includes an additional layer, over campaign management, for client management that includes management of service contracts and system configuration details for each client.

25

#### Campaign Management

30 The campaign management module 41 is a client-operated interface used to establish campaign details, approve the master electronic documents for the campaign, monitor the loading of the recipient address and customized data and activate campaign launches via the launcher module 47. Reference tables are used to maintain a default set of data for campaigns, having a layered structure to support overrides at each of the client level, the campaign level and the launch level. The management module allows clients to process each date filed in a local time zone and any e-mail addresses are validated for correct structure and domain name existence.

35

Campaign data is required to be maintained through a simple user interface that provides add, modify and read actions. There is no

5 requirement to delete a campaign, as the process will only enable campaigns to be completed initially and then, at a later date, to be archived. The campaign module includes a function that enables the campaign to be established, and optionally configured for e-commerce and fulfilment processing. The following table is indicative of the information captured by the campaign management module.

Information	Description
Campaign	A title or name for the campaign
Identifier	A key identifying the campaign generated by the system
Manager	The person responsible for managing the campaign.
Contact	The name of the contact running this campaign. This field is selected from a pick list of contacts and their details entered into a contacts table.
Delivery Agent	The primary Delivery Agent who will be launching the campaign. A pick list of delivery agents is provided from a table containing delivery agent details.
Catcher E-mail	The value defaults to the Catcher e-mail set up for the client. If a campaign is required to have a different catcher, then the e-mail address can be entered here.
Start Date	The date on which the campaign is due to be launched. Local time.
Sunset Date	The date after which the Jabmail will only present a subset of it's information to the recipient.
Close Date	The date after which the catcher discards all emails sent to it.
Status	The status of the campaign – Idle, Pending Idle, Active, Pending Active, Complete.
Allocated Sends	The number of sends allocated to this campaign. The system will validate this field for a given client against an allocation model that is able to determine Sends available in one or more contracts, less those that have been allocated (but not sent), less those that have been sent. The system should enable the user allocate a number of sends from one or more nominated accounts. The campaign would then be able to see from which account(s) the allocation came from.
E-Commerce information	Indicates if the electronic document requires e-commerce functionality and the number of products expected by the electronic document master.
Merchant ID	The Merchant ID for this campaign. The value defaults to the Merchant ID set up for the client, but can be overridden with a new ID if required for the current campaign.
Fulfilment	Configures fulfilment functionality: <u>E-mail</u> (The catcher will receive the order and then re-direct the order to the fulfilment e-mail address). <u>Fulfilment Agent</u> (The catcher will receive the order and then re-direct the order to the fulfilment agent e-mail or

Information	Description
	web site address).
	None (The catcher will store the order)

Table 1 - Campaign Setup

A sample screen layout for the "campaign maintenance" interface is illustrated in FIG. 5.

If the campaign requires an order to be redirected, the fulfilment field will be set to a value either "E-mail" or "Fulfilment Agent", as described in the following table.

Information	Description
Fulfilment Agent Address	The electronic address used by the electronic document for processing and fulfilment of the order redirected from the recipient. This field may be merged into the Electronic document when it is launched or accessed via the Catcher database.
E-mail Subject Text	This is the text to be displayed on the response e-mail so that the fulfilment agent can easily identify it and process accordingly.
E-mail Address	The e-mail address used by the Catcher for processing and fulfilment of the order.

Table 2 - Fulfilment parameters

Where an order is to be captured, the above fields appear in a "fulfilment e-mail details" user interface similar to that illustrated in FIG. 6.

The Campaign Manager provides a manual process of entering and updating the status of a master electronic document for the campaign. Review, approval and authorization may be achieved by the appropriate user setting a check box. The system will automatically enter a user identifier (UserID), a date and time stamp to record the event on the screen. The Campaign Manager does not provide any functionality to view or run the electronic document. Only one electronic document can exist with a given status for a campaign (except "Replaced"). This means that if a draft electronic document is authorised, and an original authorised electronic document existed, then it is to be replaced by setting the status of the original document to "Replaced".

It is most desirable that, for Campaigns, if a master electronic document that has been approved for one campaign is used for a different campaign, then the approval process is required to approve the electronic document in the context of the new campaign. This is by virtue of a new

record for the electronic document having to be entered, and therefore, reviewed, approved and authorised. In the case of launches – electronic documents that have been approved for a campaign can be used for all subsequent launches in the same campaign. FIG. 7 of the accompanying drawings shows an interface for entering details of the electronic document, whilst FIG. 8 shows an interface for review, approval and authorisation of an electronic document.

Each launch is required to be controlled by parameters set up using the management module by a user who is, or represents, the client's marketing manager. One or more launches belong to one campaign, i.e. a campaign may proceed as a series of sequential (or overlapping) launches. However, the logical data model, illustrated in FIG. 9, shows that a campaign has one or more electronic documents. A launch can only be activated if the electronic document to which it is attached has been authorised. This model allows for an electronic document to be modified for a launch (perhaps due to the response of a previous launch).

The following table is a base set of suggested information required for launch maintenance.

Information	Description
Launch Sequence	The sequence of a launch within a campaign
Launch Name	The name given to the launch to differentiate against other launches for the same campaign
Launch Date	A date and time when the electronic documents are to be launched presented in a local date format
Close date	A date after which responses are discarded by the Catcher on receipt (presented in a local date format).
Sunset Date	A date after which the electronic documents functionality is restricted. Also, for e-commerce, a date and time when electronic documents inhibit the user from ordering goods, presented in a local date format
Launch Mode	Determines the conditions under which the launcher will operate, presented in a local date format. Test, Pilot, or Full
Launch Comments	Comments associated with the launch by the person that activates the launch.
Allocated Sends	The number of sends allocated to the launch. This can be pre-allocated, and then adjusted when the recipient list is finalized.
Recipient List Count	This is a number derived by counting the number of valid recipients in the recipient list for the launch. However, initially it will be manually



Information	Description
	entered.
Actual Sends	This is a number derived by counting the number of e-mails actually sent by the launcher.
Send Rate	A numeric value indicating the rate at which electronic documents are to be launched. The launcher takes this value and launches the electronic documents separated by the time derived by this value.
Send during peak	An indicator used to determine if the electronic documents are to be launched during the peak period. The peak period is determined by the day and time values stored in the database
Launch Status	The status of a launch at any time – Held, Active, Cancelled, In Progress, Pause, Initial, Restart, Sent.
Delivery Agent	The agent who is responsible for the actual launch of the electronic documents.
Last Modified by	Userid of the person that last modified the record
Last Modified Date	The date and time that the last person modified the record

Table 3 – Launch Maintenance Information

In order to add a launch the following rules are to be observed: a campaign must exist that is not cancelled, the client record must not be cancelled, and an electronic document record must exist for the campaign. If an electronic document doesn't exist, then a blank electronic document record should be created using a template. The following table describes the information entered when adding a campaign using the campaign management module.

Information	Man/ Opt	Values	Default
Electronic document ID	M	Picked from available Electronic documents for the campaign. An available Electronic document is one that does not have the status of "Replaced"	
Launch Sequence	M	System Derived and based on ascending launch date order of launches that are not cancelled.	

Information	Man/ Opt	Values	Default
Launch Name	M	Any alpha numeric combination	Campaign Name
Launch Date	O	=>now() AND =>Campaign Start Date global date	Campaign Start Date
Sunset Date	O	>today(midnight) global date AND >Launch Date(midnight) And < CloseDate	Campaign Sunset Date
Launch Mode	M/O	Test, Production	Test
Launch Status Comments	O	Any textual message or value	Update
Allocated Sends	M	=>0 =<Campaign allocation less allocated/sent	Campaign allocation less allocated/sent
Launch Status	M	Idle	Idle
Delivery Agent	O	Validated by the table of delivery agents for the client	
Last Modified by	M	System derived	Read Only
Last Modified Date	M	System derived	Read Only

Table 4 - Campaign Add Information

An example user interface for entering campaign launch parameters is illustrated in FIG. 10.

For launch statuses that are not complete, launch parameters can be modified by the user according to certain rules. Activation is the moment when the user finally schedules the launch. Validation required to restart a launch should mirror the validation undertaken by the Launcher. The following validation is required to enable a launch to proceed:

For launch modes = Pilot or Production:

- Client is current
- Campaign is current
- Launch Date => Today()
- Campaign Start Date =< Today()
- Campaign Close Date => Today()
- Launch Status = Initial, Held
- Sunset Date is > Launch Date or is null
- Electronic document is reviewed, approved and authorised
- Recipient data is available to the launch

- Client.DigitalCertificate field is not null

For all Launch modes:

- E-commerce indicator matches the Electronic document
  - If ok, validate required e-commerce referential data
- Fulfilment indicator matches the Electronic document
  - If ok, validate required fulfilment referential data
- Issue a warning message (and prompt to continue or cancel) if other launches for the same campaign are active, restarted, paused or in progress
- Issue a warning (and prompt to continue or cancel) if sunset date is null

Activation redisplay all data associated with the launch for confirmation. Prominence is given to:

- Launch Mode
- Launch Date
- Allocated Sends
- Loaded Recipients
- Sunset Date

The user can respond:

- Ok – activates the launch; whilst
- Cancel – returns to the activation screen with fields as updated.

Test launches are scheduled immediately (i.e. the launch date/time is ignored) and launched at the unrestricted rate. Pausing a launch stops the launching of the electronic documents. The following validation is required to enable a launch to be paused (status changed to Pending Idle, then subsequently Idle), namely the launch is Active. Restarting a launch enables a launch to continue from where it was paused changing the status to Pending Active, then subsequently Active. Validation required to restart a launch should mirror the validation undertaken by the Launcher.

A function is provided to report on campaign readiness that enables a marketing manager to see at a glance the readiness of campaigns for the client. The report should be able to filter on "Campaign Manager", "Campaign Name" or 'all'. The launches selected must be for:

- Campaigns that are not cancelled, and
- Launches that are not cancelled or are not sent.

Traffic light indicators are provided to give the following indications:

- RED – the (launch date OR campaign start date) is less than

"Threshold 1" days away (including a passed launch date) and the launch is not activated

- Amber – the (launch date OR campaign start date) is less than "Threshold 2" days away and the launch is not activated
- 5      • Green – the (launch date or campaign start date) is more than "Threshold 2" days away or the launch is activated or the launch date is In Progress

The information is ordered by readiness level (Red, Amber, Green) then ascending Launch date order. The threshold parameters are time  
10      parameters that are in units of 'days' and can be maintained through a reference table by the marketing manager. Suggested default values are be provided wherein Red = 7 and Amber = 14.

The following table contains a suggested presentation of the  
15      information for "All". This function is required to drill down on an entry and enable updates to be performed.

Campaign Name	Launch Name	Readi- ness	Campaign Manager	Launch Date
Olympic Games 2000	Olympic Games Pilot	RED	Ann Zoff	1 <sup>st</sup> October 2000
Football FunFootball Fun	Football Fun	RED	Fred Flintstone	5 <sup>th</sup> October 2000
Olympic Games 2000	Olympic Games II	Amber	Ann Zoff	7 <sup>th</sup> October 2000
Pre Christmas Specials	Santa's Specials Pilot	Amber	John Smith	10 <sup>th</sup> October 2000
Olympic Games 2000	Santa's Clearance	Green	Ann Zoff	14 <sup>th</sup> October 2000
Olympic Games 2000	Santa's last minute rush	Green	Ann Zoff	21 <sup>st</sup> October 2000
Pre Christmas Specials	Santa for Mums and Dads Pilot II	Green	John Smith	17 <sup>th</sup> October 2000

Table 5 - Report for campaign readiness

Recipient data 42 is the data that holds the addressing information  
20      of the electronic document recipients. The data must contain a minimum of the e-mail address and optionally merge data to be inserted into each electronic document. The client generally provides this in a standard file format ready for importing to the campaign database via the Catcher. An import function is required to take a file and import it into the recipient list  
25      table. The imported data will comprise the e-mail address of the recipient

and any other information required to be imbedded in the body of the e-mail such as surname, title etc.

A campaign duplicate recipients report may also be provided by the campaign manager module, as required:

- 5       • Summary – counts the distinct e-mail addresses that are duplicated
  - Launch
- Detail – lists all recipient records that are duplicated
  - Launch
  - Launch Mode
  - 10      ○ Recipient ID
  - Send Status

15       The electronic document catcher (described below) uses reference tables to determine threshold values and text used in replies to recipients. The reference information is a system default but can be overridden by the client for each campaign and/or launch within the campaign manager. Other modules within the direct e-mail marketing systems suite of programs use the data, such as the launcher, the catcher etc.

#### Launcher

20       We turn now to consider the launcher module 47, which provides a server function that is capable of sending all electronic documents prepared with the aid of the translator module 45 and builder module 46. The send process will deliver the content to a s/mime send service 53 for delivery to recipients 54. The launcher will update launch details into a database for tracking and reporting. The Launcher will provide launch statistics for reporting in the cockpit module 48. The launcher must also respond to status change commands for activate, pause and status information requests from the campaign management module 41.

25       The launcher module receives a trigger for the launch of a particular electronic document. The following actions are required by the launcher to prepare the document for launch. In relation to e-mail addressing, a client supplied email list will have been loaded into the recipient records, the necessary fields for the storage of personalised data are checked and any exceptions reported. In relation to e-mail processing, check the status of the launch, open the master template for the electronic document, replace the <tag> fields in the master template with the recipient data, insert the catcher address for Bounce Back, insert the web content url address in the <email> tag, attach a global universal identifier (GUID), MIME encode

30

35

the document, digitally sign the encoded content of the electronic and sign each message with signature code provided by the client or the independent certification authority 52.

The launcher provides launch time controls for off-peak and weekend processing of launches. The rate of launch is controlled by calculating the time required between each electronic document launched. The launcher module should desirably strive to maintain a queue depth between one and five launched electronic documents whilst still maintaining the required launch rate.

### Cockpit

The cockpit module 48 is integrated with the catcher module 49, and provides a user interface for the client 11 that is accessible via the Internet. The purpose of the cockpit is to display campaign performance statistics, refresh the statistics in real time and provide visual warnings. The performance statistics relate to the progress of the launch, receipts received, together with fulfilment, e-commerce and any client desired custom data. Visual warnings may be provided for send failures, delivery failures, stock thresholds and e-commerce failures.

A list of campaigns will enable the client to select a specific campaign to monitor. Access to the specific campaign is not dependant on the campaign status. This means that the cockpit will display (or attempt to display) available information for any campaigns. Campaigns with multiple launches will be presented on a second list. A campaign that has only one launch is required to be presented immediately (i.e. without the need to select from the list).



Campaign	Status	Launch	Status
 Olympic Games	Current	 OG Pilot	In Progress

Table 6 - Example campaign select list.

The selection mechanism allows the user to easily select a campaign from a list of many campaigns. For example, a client that has fifty campaigns (or a single campaign with fifty launches) with varying statuses is able to select the required campaign/launch easily using a combination of pull down lists and entering a particular name. The list should be sorted alphabetically. In addition one, more than one, or all items are able to be selected, allowing an aggregated total to be

displayed.

The following reports are provided by the cockpit module for the client:

- Exception reports – bad address, missed data replacement, server not responding; and
- Launch processing details - #sent, <date:time> (start-finish), status changes.

Statistical information is required to be automatically refreshed every ten seconds and/or manually. Information received from the same recipient more than once is counted each time. Header information is provided for the statistics displayed in the cockpit, e.g.:

- Campaign name, status, fulfilment indicator, e-commerce indicator, start date, close date
- Launch name, sequence, status, mode, date.

The following Cockpit body information is provided for each of launch, response, fulfilment and e-commerce categories, similar to that set out in Table 7 below. The cockpit information is a summary of the data, where the details (including eCommerce details) can be accessed by 'drilling down' to display a single response order. These will be refreshed at the same rate as the textual information.

<u>Launch</u>	Count	% Recipients	Failures	Threshold Setting
Allocated Sends	100000			
Recipients	98765			
Actual Sends	22123	22.40%		
Pending	70000	70.88%		
Errors <sup>1</sup>	55	0.06%	R/A/G <sup>2</sup>	500
Delivery Receipt	20976	21.24%		
Read Receipt	20000	20.25%		

<u>Response</u>	Count	% Recipients	
Opened(Presented) <sup>3</sup>	5100	5.16%	
Replied	2250	2.28%	
Unopened(Unpresented) <sup>4</sup>	15856	15.88%	
Jabmail® Replays <sup>5</sup>	875	20%	
Opt Out	50	0.05%	

<sup>1</sup> Errors are where the e-mail failed to reach it's destination (due to unknown domain, user, or invalid address format)

<sup>2</sup> Red, Amber, Green indicator – Red if count reaches threshold, Amber within 10% of threshold, Green below threshold.

<sup>3</sup> Opened means that the Electronic document was opened and either the Electronic document® exit/close button or the e-mail close button was used to close the document presentation

<sup>4</sup> Unopened(Unpresented) can be derived = Actual sends – Opened(Presented) - Errors

<sup>5</sup> The total number of repeated viewings of an Electronic document.

Send to a Friend	60	0.06%
Expired Sunset Date <sup>6</sup>	1	0.01%

<u>Fulfilment</u>	Count	% Recipients	Overflow	Threshold Setting
Information Requests	2200	2.23%		
Orders	1500	1.52%		
Product ABC001 <sup>7</sup>	1200	1.21%	R/A/G	10000
Product ABC002	700	0.71%	R/A/G	10000
Quantity Ordered	1900	1.92%		
Value Ordered	\$75000			

<u>E-Commerce</u>	Count	Value	Denials	Threshold Setting
Authorisation Requests	1500	75000		
Authorisation Approved	1250	62500		
Funds Captured	300	15000		
Authorisation Denied	250	12500	R/A/G	10000

Table 7 - Text data for cockpit display

<sup>6</sup> Expired sunset dates are those Electronic document responses that were received at the catcher before the campaign close date with a sunset date that expired.

<sup>7</sup> The number of rows here expands to the number of products offered in the Electronic document. This line and the following are an example of an Electronic document with 2 products.

### Catcher

The catcher module 49 is a sub-system that receives responses from recipients 54 of the electronic documents and stores the data contained in the responses in a database 55 for statistical analysis and detailed reporting. Where required by the client, the catcher can also reply to the recipient with receipt confirmation. Validation rules are applied by the catcher module to the incoming responses to ensure that all responses are either stored successfully or parked for further manual analysis.

The replies to recipient responses are sent by the recipient to an e-mail account determined by the campaign manager module. The catcher module is hosted on a computer system physically separate from the launcher, and preferably is able to accept responses for more than one dedicated account, i.e. one catcher may service many catcher addresses. The e-mail account to which a response is made will be determined by the contents of the electronic document. All received e-mail responses are processed and stored in the database 55 according to specific rules.

The expected formatted response data is encrypted, and as such requires decryption by the catcher. When an order is received in a response the catcher must determine the processing requirements. The fulfilment processing options are:



- Store the order details – the client will act on the stored data;
- Redirect the order details to an e-mail address to be used for the order and fulfilment processing. The catcher determines the address by:
  - Receiving it in the Jabmail® response, or
  - Accessing the data from the campaign manager.

The payment processing options are:

- Payment on account required to progress the order;
- Successful payment via the payment gateway required to progress the order.

Invalid, unexpected or erroneous response e-mails are able to be reviewed, edited and reprocessed as required. No responses should be left in an unprocessed state by the catcher module.

Responses received by the Catcher are validated using the following rules:

- E-mails that are not in the expected reply format -
  - E-mails that cannot be identified as originating from a campaign recipient should be stored in their entirety and identified as "Unknown"
  - E-mails that can be identified as potentially originating from a campaign recipient, but is not in the expected format should be stored in their entirety and identified as "Freeform reply".

**Note:** for this to be of use to a client, the Catcher must be able to identify the client and the campaign

- Responses in the expected reply format -
  - Corrupt, missing or unidentified key data, i.e. one or more of Client ID, Campaign ID, Launch sequence or electronic document ID are stored in the expected format as an "orphaned" record;
  - Expired Sunset date (the sunset date is validated according to rules that determine the expiry date of the offer anticipated by the client when the sunset date was set, using time zones as necessary). If the campaign close date has not passed the following will occur:
    - Stored in the expected format and identified as "expired"
    - If the response requires E-commerce or fulfilment

functionality, a message will be displayed informing the recipient that the 'offer' is no longer available

- If the close date has passed, then the e-mails are deleted and not processed
- Valid data
  - Standard statistical information is stored;
  - Customised client requested information is stored;
  - E-commerce invokes the e-commerce functionality via the e-commerce interface 51 and stores required e-commerce information.

The catcher module also provides messaging for particular events that occur, including reply to the sender of the administration response, the outcome of the action. The message gives details of the subject of the request, the object of the request, the date and time of the request, the date and time of the completion of the requested task, and the outcome of the task. The nature of the messaging is flexible and configurable for each campaign either via e-mail (in electronic document format or in plain text format) or via mobile phone (eg. using SMS or WAP functions). Authentication of e-mail messages is achieved through the use of a digital certificate issued by a certification authority 52. The Catcher is suitably arranged to digitally sign all outbound messages, thereby positively identifying the client.

The following information is captured by the catcher module from the electronic document initiated replies:

• Standard Details (Table 8A)

Data element	Values	Description
Recipient ID		The unique identifier used to identify the recipient of an electronic document
Campaign ID		The campaign to which the electronic document was related
Launch Seq		The Launch Sequence for the campaign ID
Document ID		Identifies an electronic document
Opened		Date and time the electronic document was opened
Replied		Date and time electronic document was responded to
Received		Date and time electronic document was received.
Sender e-mail address		The address from which the reply was received

Preferred e-mail address		The address supplied by the recipient as the preferred reply address
Opt In Ind	Y/N	Indicates if the user has specifically requested that they wish to opt in for information and are retained on the mailing list

- Custom Details (Table 8B) - For campaigns with client defined details:

Data element	Values	Description
Send to a Friend	Y/N	An indicator that is set if a recipient wants the electronic document to be sent to a friend.
Friend's e-mail address		E-mail address validated by the electronic document on entry
Request for Info	Y/N	An indication of a request for information. This is a standard indicator that reflects the recipients' request for more info. It is possible that this will be supplemented with additional indicators for differing types of info.
Various		The data specified by the client e.g request for info, free gifts, marketing info, etc

- E-Commerce Details (Table 8C) - For campaigns requiring e-commerce credit card functionality only:

Data element	Values	Description
Payment details (encrypted)		(Where payment gateway processing does not require the recipient to be online) Card Type, Card Number, Name on Card, Expiry Date, Value
E-commerce status information		Authorised, In progress, Transferred, Declined, System error

- Fulfilment Details (Table 8D)

Data element	Values	Description
Delivery Details		Delivery address as typed in/modified by the recipient
Order details		The details associated with the order placed – this may be more than one order. 1) Qty, Product Description, Product Code, Unit price, total price, freight

		2) Qty, Product Description, Product Code, Unit price, total price, freight etc
Payment Method		On Account, Credit Card, Invoice, COD, FOC, Cheque in post

Received e-mails that have failed validation tests are stored in their entirety by the system. For this information to be of any use tools are required for support and client personnel to enable a level of rework to be undertaken including analysis, data correction, and reprocessing. The catcher is also provided with utilities to review the invalid e-mails in order to list, sort, filter, print list, select, read file contents, string search and copy.

File editing facilities for data correction are provided to enable find and replace – individual and bulk files, reformat – individual and bulk files, edit data, print data, file rename and file delete purposes. Functionality is provided to reprocess one or more e-mails that have failed validation. The reprocessing must replicate the normal process invoked by the Catcher. However, if the reprocessing fails again, then the system should not allow a duplicate copy of the invalid file. Once the catcher has received a response from a recipient, it is required to determine if a reply is required to be sent back to the recipient. The following criteria will determine the response to be made:

<b>Recipients' Response Type</b>	<b>Catcher's Reply Type</b>
Request for information	Acknowledgement of Request
Order Goods	Confirmation of all orders for the Campaign
Credit Card or Funds transfer	Status and ID of the transaction

Table 9 - Response and reply types

The responses are desirably table based so that customised messages can be built user the catcher module at the system, client and/or campaign level.

The advantages of the invention, when compared with known arrangements for sending or distributing electronic documents with active content include, obviating the requirement for separate documents to be attached to e-mail messages, particularly executable attachments which require installation of suitable host applications on a recipients computing device. Immediate presentation of content embedded in the electronic

document is achieved upon opening the document without requiring invocation by a recipient, through use of interpreter technology available within e-mail client applications, hence providing enhanced impact. Provision is also made for gathering responses from recipients of electronic documents or allowing recipients to opt out of further communications.

Throughout this specification, unless the context requires otherwise, the word "comprise", and variations such as "comprises" or "comprising", will be understood to imply the inclusion of a stated integer or group of integers but not the exclusion of any other integer or group of integers.

The aim of the specification has been to describe the preferred embodiments of the invention without limiting the invention to any one embodiment or specific collection of features or particular sequence of method steps. Further modifications and improvements to the invention, preferred embodiments of which are described herein, will be evident to persons skilled in this field of technology.

**CLAIMS**

1. A system for the distribution of an electronic document containing a presentation to a plurality of desired recipients via an electronic mail service, the system comprising:

- (a) a management module that manages master electronic documents, including configuration maintenance;
- (b) a builder module that integrates creative content with a document template to produce the master electronic document;
- (c) a launcher module that merges recipient data with the master electronic document and initiates transmission of the electronic document to each desired recipient in accordance with delivery and scheduling details provided by the management module; and
- (d) a catcher module that receives and processes automatic receipts from recipients of the electronic document.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein the management module performs maintenance of e-commerce configuration details, and merging of delivery, scheduling, and e-commerce details.

3. The system of claim 1 wherein the creative content includes any one or more of text objects, image objects, sound objects, audio-visual objects and animation objects.

4. The system of claim 1 wherein the document template includes a header portion for holding address information of the recipient and a body portion.

5. The system of claim 4 wherein the body portion includes the following sections:

- (a) a computing platform independent script section for controlling presentation of content of the electronic document and including a subsection for automatically returning a receipt;
- (b) a markup language section for providing links to subsections of encoded content within the document; and
- (c) a content section including a plurality of subsections each encoded in accordance with a multipurpose communications protocol supported by an electronic mail service.

6. The system of claim 1 wherein the master electronic document is forwarded by the launcher module to a communications server for transmission to recipients determined by a recipient list.

7. The system of claim 1 wherein the recipient data is stored in a database.
8. The system of claim 1 wherein the recipient data includes address information and other personalised information relevant to the recipient and an associated campaign.
9. The system of claim 1 wherein the delivery details include an anticipated delivery date, and an expiry date beyond which the presentation will be limited to an explanation to the recipient that the campaign has lapsed.
10. The system of claim 1 wherein a global unique identifier for each recipient is created automatically by the system to enable each response to be clearly traced to a recipient address.
11. The system of claim 1 further comprising a cockpit module that provides a user interface to track the progress of the distribution of the electronic document.
12. The system of claim 1 further comprising a fulfilment interface that processes orders for goods and services made in response to receipt of the electronic document.
13. The system of claim 1 further comprising an e-commerce interface that communicates with one or more payment services for financial transactions.
14. The system of claim 1 further comprising an import/export interface that performs one or more of:
  - exports response data captured by the capture module;
  - imports recipient data to the catcher module; or
  - imports recipient data to the management module.
15. An electronic document, arranged for transmission from a sender according to address information in a header portion of the document, said document structured to include within a body portion of the document:
  - (a) a computing platform independent script section for controlling presentation of content of the electronic document and including a subsection for automatically returning a receipt;
  - (b) a markup language section for providing links to subsections of encoded content within the document; and
  - (c) a content section including a plurality of subsections each encoded in accordance with a multipurpose communications protocol supported by an electronic mail service;

wherein automated presentation of content to the recipient upon opening the electronic document is controlled by a client application associated with the electronic mail service.

16. The electronic document of claim 15 wherein the script section includes further subsections for one or more of:

- (i) collecting feedback information provided manually by the recipient in reply to the content presented;
- (ii) collecting statistical feedback information, collected automatically, of timing and/or other event information;
- (iii) encrypting the response information and returning the encrypted response to the sender in the receipt; and/or
- (iv) implementing campaign expiry dates.

17. The electronic document of claim 15 wherein the script subsection for automatically returning a receipt suitably creates and places the receipt in an out box accessible via the recipient's client application.

18. The electronic document of claim 15 wherein the receipt, which is addressed to a receiver designated by the sender, or their agent, contains a variable allowing the recipient to opt out of further communications with the sender.

19. The electronic document of claim 15 wherein the receipt contains an e-mail address variable to instruct the system that another electronic document/presentation is required to be sent to a friend or associate of the recipient at the e-mail address entered by the recipient.

20. The electronic document of claim 15 wherein the mark-up language section of the electronic document includes a canvas page section that establishes a style for the presentation.

21. The electronic document of claim 15 wherein the mark-up language section of the electronic document further includes:

- (i) a reply form page for collecting feedback information from the recipient;
- (ii) a fulfilment order page for taking orders for goods and/or services; and/or
- (iii) an electronic commerce page for facilitating electronic payments offered in relation to the orders.

22. The electronic document of claim 15 wherein the body portion of the electronic document further includes a plain text section for use with sub-functional client application software, including an electronic mail client lacking mark-up language support.



23. The electronic document of claim 15 wherein the client application is an e-mail client or a web browser client application.

24. A method for distributing an electronic document containing a presentation to a plurality of desired recipients, said method including the steps of:

- (a) obtaining delivery and scheduling details for the distribution of the electronic document, together with data about the desired recipients;
- (b) integrating creative content with a document template to produce a master electronic document;
- (c) merging the recipient data with the master electronic document and initiating transmission of the electronic document to each desired recipient in accordance with the delivery and scheduling details; and
- (d) receiving and processing automatic receipts from recipients of the electronic document.

25 The method of claim 24 further including the step of merging product information with the document template when producing the master electronic document.

26. A computer including processing means, storage means, communication means and display means when programmed to perform the steps of:

- (a) obtain delivery and scheduling details for the distribution of the electronic document, together with data about the desired recipients;
- (b) integrate creative content with a document template to produce a master electronic document;
- (c) merge the recipient data with the master electronic document and initiate transmission of the electronic document to each desired recipient in accordance with the delivery and scheduling details; and
- (d) receive and process automatic receipts from recipients of the electronic document.

27. An apparatus for transmitting an electronic document structured such that the following sections are included within a body portion of the document:

- (a) a computing platform independent script section for controlling presentation of content of the electronic document and including a subsection for automatically returning a receipt;
- (b) a markup language section for providing links to subsections of encoded content within the document; and

(c) a content section including a plurality of subsections each encoded in accordance with a multipurpose communications protocol supported by an electronic mail service;

said apparatus comprising:

a launcher module that merges address information of a desired recipient with a master electronic document containing creative content to form the electronic document and that initiates transmission of the electronic document to the desired recipient via the electronic mail service; and  
a catcher module that receives and processes automatic receipts from recipients of the electronic document.

28. A method of direct email marketing to approved recipients including the steps of:

performing a builder function that combines content with a document template to form a master electronic document;

performing a launcher function that merges the master electronic document with address information of the approved recipients, and sends the master electronic document by email; and

performing a catcher function that receives and processes responses from recipients, said responses being at least a read receipt.

29. The method of claim 28 further including the step of certifying the address information of the approved recipients.

30. The method of claim 28 further including the step of performing a cockpit function to monitor the progress of the direct email marketing.

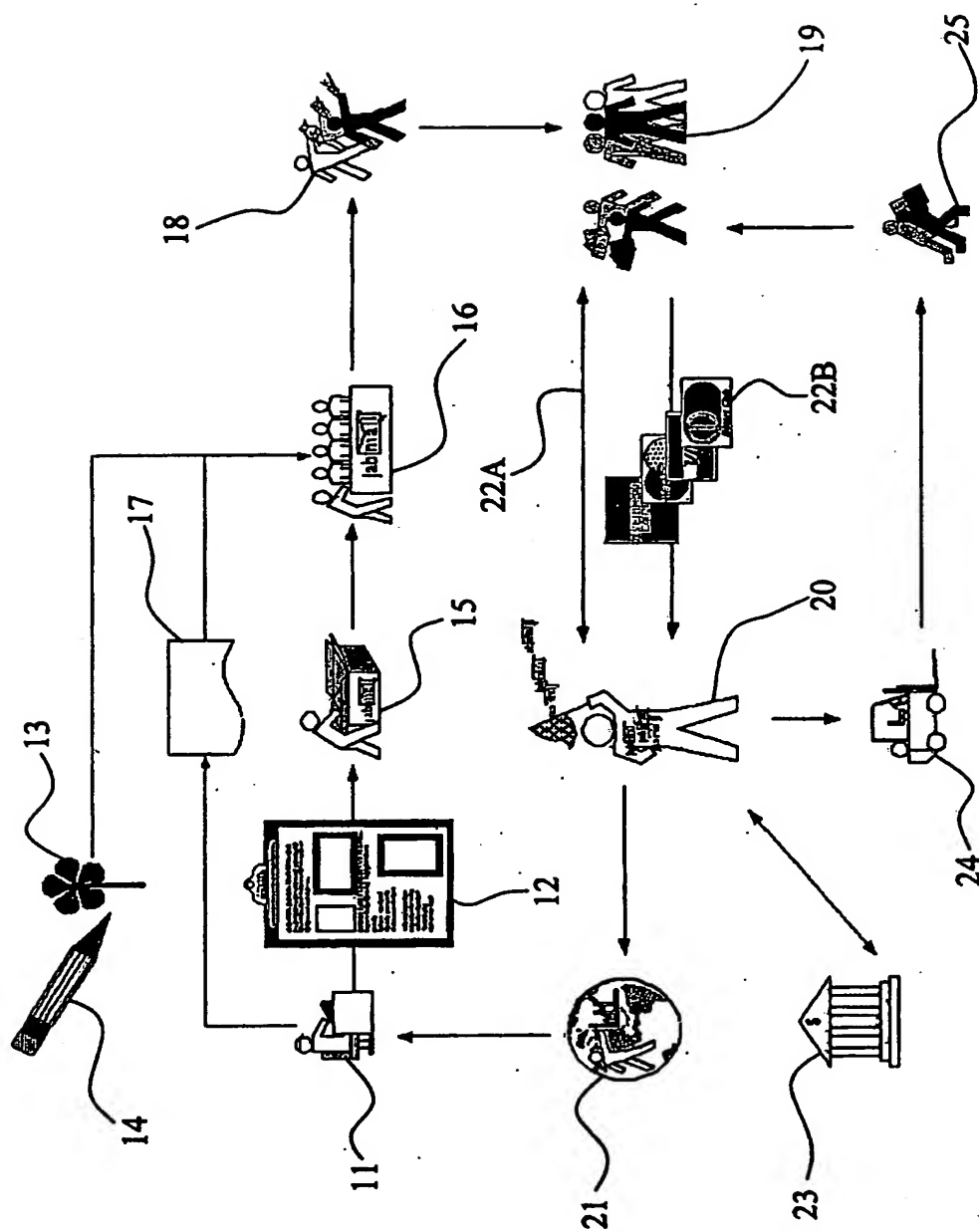
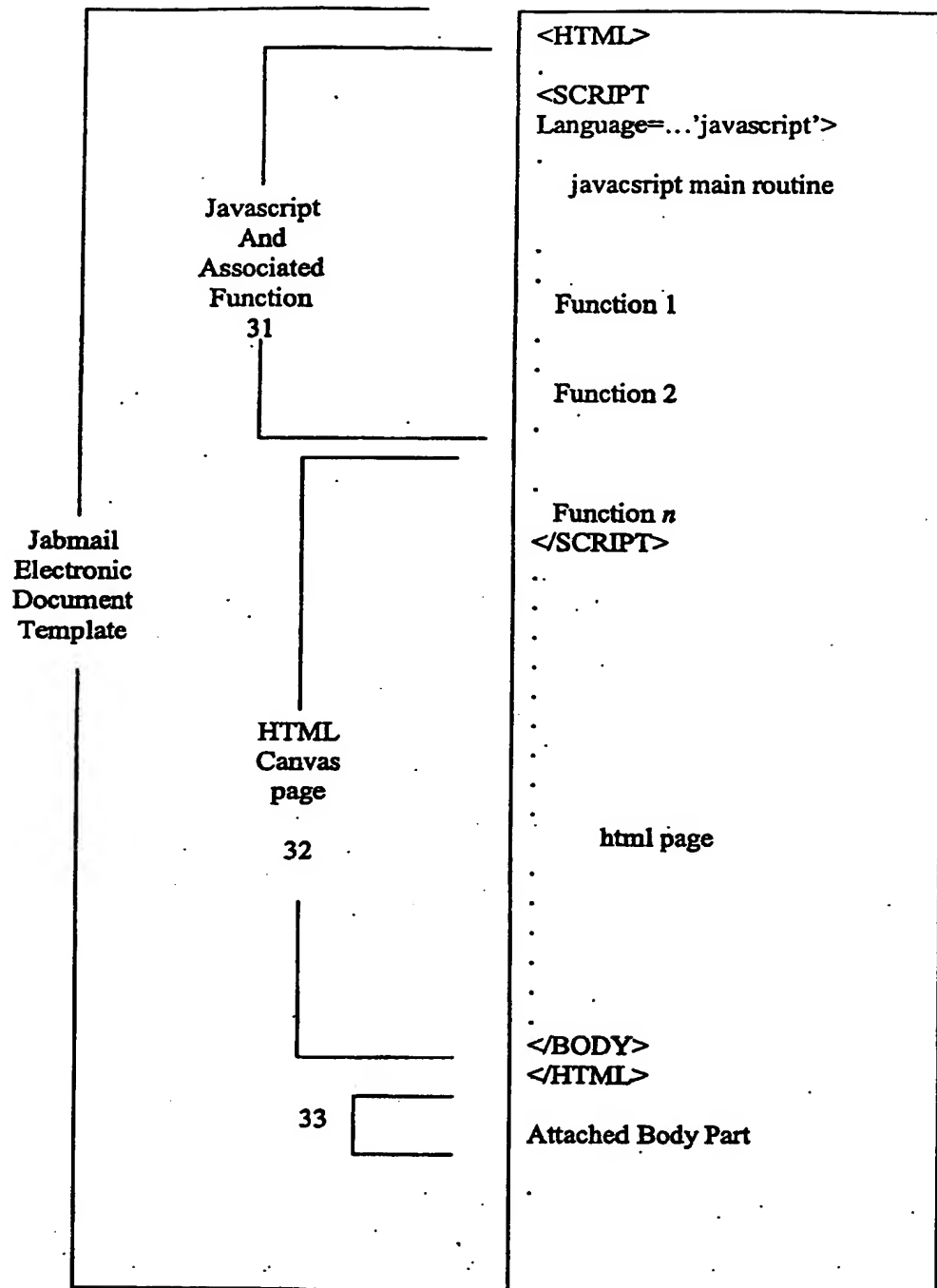


Fig 1



**Fig 2**

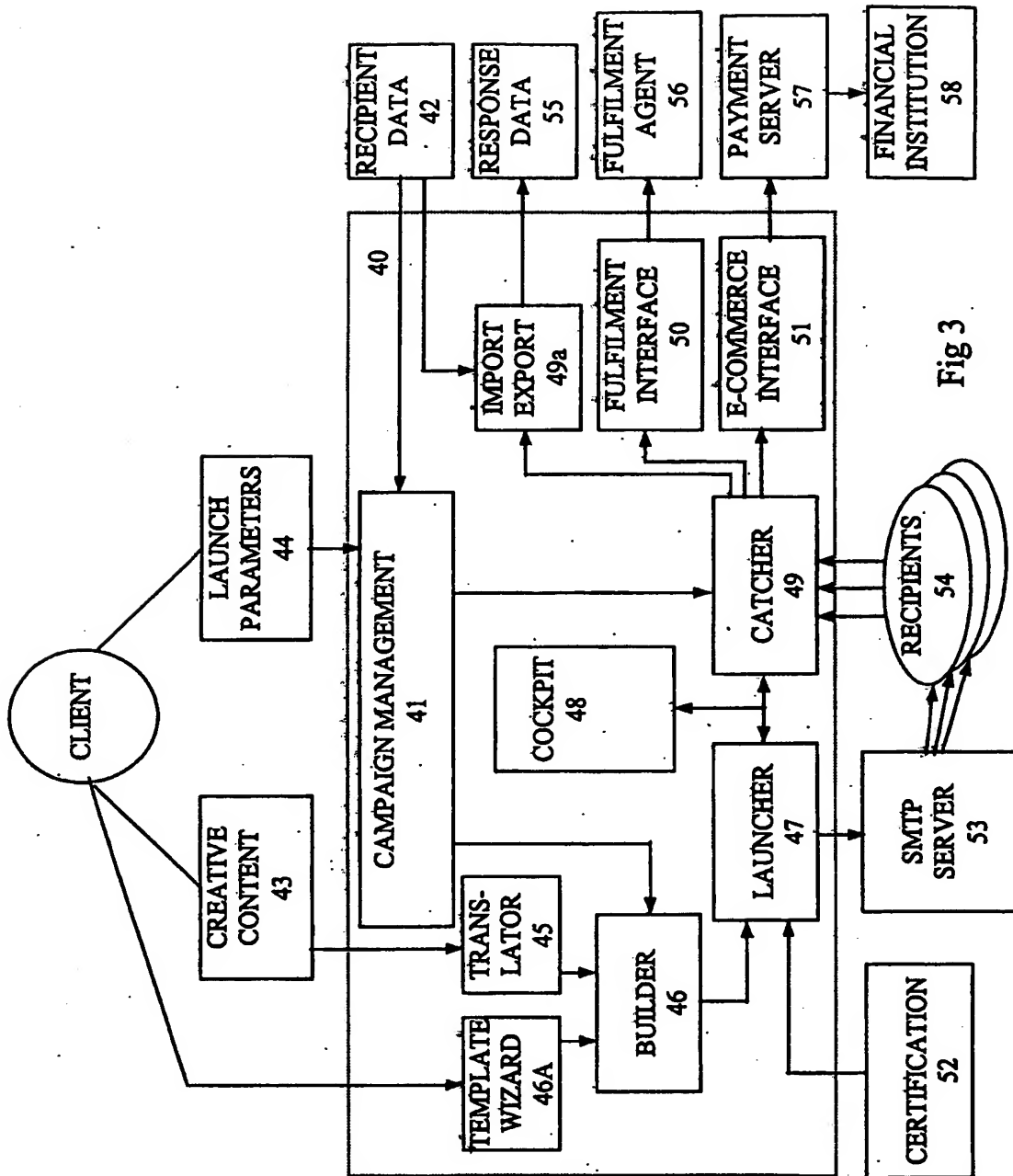


Fig 3

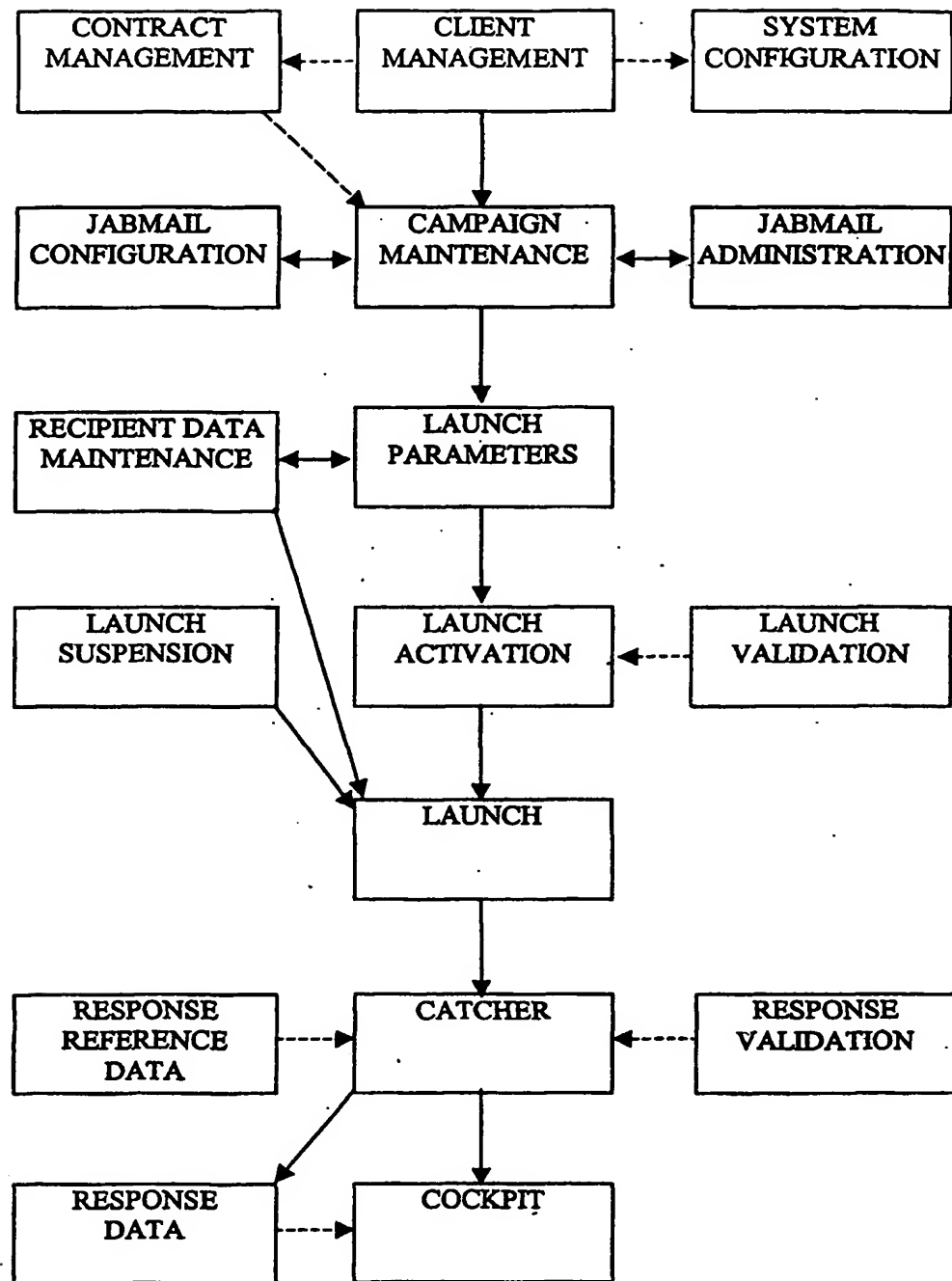


Fig 4

<b>Campaign:</b>	TopCo Topgame Global Campaign		0214
<b>Manager:</b>	Lois Lane		<b>Contact:</b> Clark Kent
<b>Delivery Agent:</b>	Top Deliveries		<b>Catcher E-mail:</b> Jabcatcher@jabmail.com
<b>Start Date:</b>	1/1/2000	Brisbane	<b>Close Date:</b> 31/11/2000
<b>Status:</b>	Current		<b>Fulfilment:</b> Catcher Redirected
<b>Allocated Sends:</b>	100,000		
<b>E-Commerce:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>Merchant ID:</b>	1234-ABCD		

Fig 5

<b>Campaign:</b> <u>TopCo Topgame Global Campaign</u> (ID:0214)	
<b>Direct E-mail:</b>	topco@global.com
<b>Direct E-mail Subj Text:</b>	Priority <u>TopCo Topgame</u> Order
<b>Catcher Redirected e-mail:</b>	fred@bedrock.com
<b>Catcher Redir subj text:</b>	Priority <u>TopCo Topgame</u> Order

Fig 6

<b>Campaign:</b>	TopCo:Topgame Global Campaign		0214
<b>Jabmail ID</b>	ABCD0011		
<b>Name</b>	ABCD Bank EFTPOS		
<b>Location/URL</b>	www.Jabmail.client/ABCD EFTPOS		<input type="button" value="Browse"/>
<b>Reviewed</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Approved</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Authorised</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Fig 7

<b>Campaign:</b>	TopCo:Topgame Global Campaign		0214	
<b>Jabmail ID</b>	ABCD0011			
<b>Name</b>	ABCD Bank EFTPOS			
<b>Location/URL</b>	www.Jabmail.client/ABCD EFTPOS			
<b>Reviewed</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Harold Wilson	16:43 11/1/2000	Brisbane
<b>Approved</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Fred Flintstone	09:25 10/1/2000	Brisbane
<b>Authorised</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Margaret Thatcher	05:30 11/1/2000	Brisbane

Fig 8



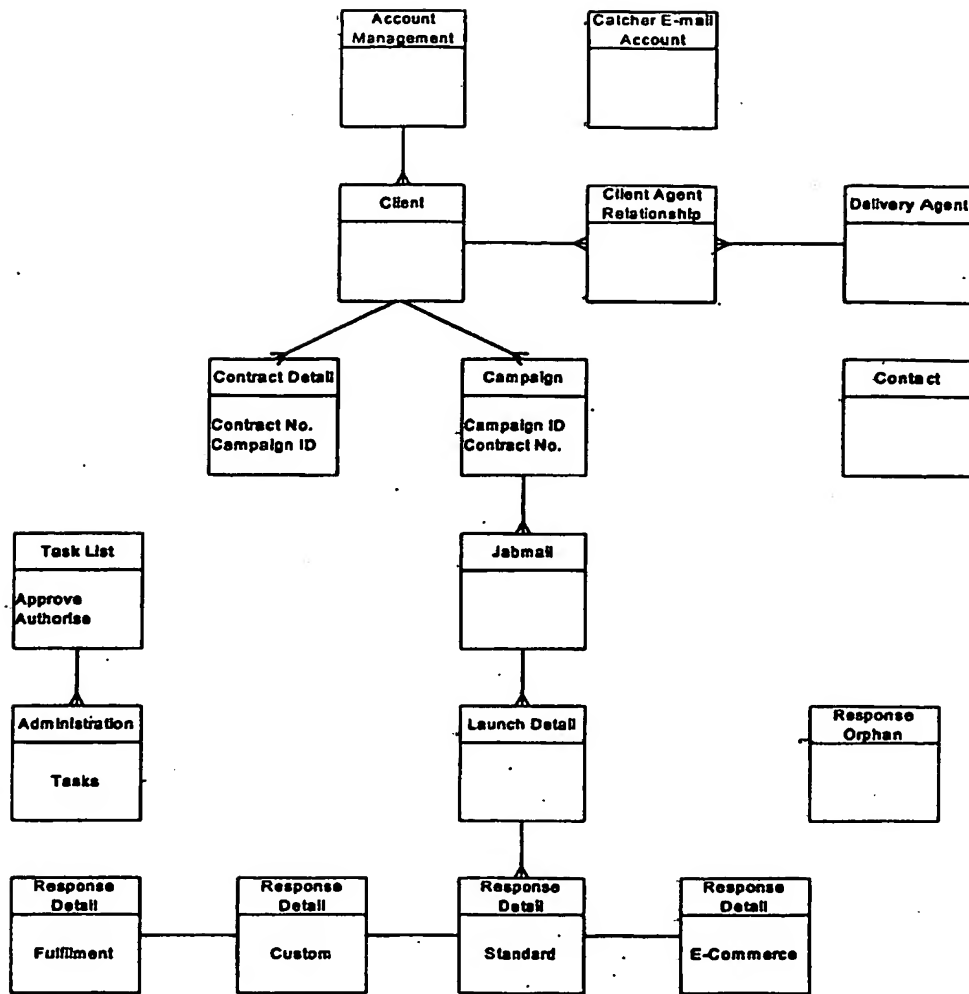


Fig 9

<b>Campaign</b>	HopGo! Hop game Global Campaign		0214
<b>Launch Sequence</b>	001		
<b>Launch Name</b>	ABCD Big Savers Campaign		
<b>Launch Date</b>	17:00 1/11/2000	Brisbane	
<b>Order End Date</b>	30/11/2000	Brisbane	
<b>Sunset Date</b>	10/12/2000	Brisbane	
<b>Launch Mode</b>	Pilot		
<b>Launch Comments</b>	The recipient list was over 4000 customers short – This was due ...		
<b>Allocated Sends</b>	200000		
<b>Recipient List Count</b>	15678		
<b>Actual Sends</b>	0		
<b>Send Rate</b>	1000		
<b>Send rate unit</b>	Daily		
<b>Launch Status</b>	Pending		
<b>Delivery Agent</b>	ABC Launchers		
<b>Last Modified by</b>	Fred Flintstone		
<b>Last Modified Date</b>	19:45 12/10/2000	Brisbane	

Fig 10

## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.  
**PCT/AU01/01659**

<b>A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER</b>		
Int. Cl. <sup>7</sup> : G06F 17/30		
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
<b>B. FIELDS SEARCHED</b>		
Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)		
Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched		
Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used) WPAT( email, distribution)		
<b>C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT</b>		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	WO 00/64118 (Streamedia.com LLC ) 26 October 2000 Whole document	15
Y		1,16
X	US 5 862 325 (Reed et al.) 19 January 1999 Abstract, figures, column 38 lines 27-34, columns 56,57, column 93 lines 30-43, column 123 lines 16-25, column 124 lines 21-31	15
Y		1,16
X	EP 869 652 (Tumbleweed Software Corporation) 7 October 1998 Abstract, page 9 lines 18-38, 54-58	15
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> See patent family annex		
<p>* Special categories of cited documents:</p> <p>"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance</p> <p>"E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date</p> <p>"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)</p> <p>"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means</p> <p>"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed</p> <p>"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention</p> <p>"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone</p> <p>"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art</p> <p>"&amp;" document member of the same patent family</p>		
Date of the actual completion of the international search <b>13 February 2002</b>		Date of mailing of the international search report <b>19 FEB 2002</b>
Name and mailing address of the ISA/AU  AUSTRALIAN PATENT OFFICE PO BOX 200, WODEN ACT 2606, AUSTRALIA E-mail address: pct@ipaustalia.gov.au Facsimile No. (02) 6285 3929		Authorized officer  <b>DALE E. SIVER</b> Telephone No : (02) 6283 2196

## INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/AU01/01659

C (Continuation). DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	WO 99/50778 (Slade) 7 October 1999 Abstract	1

**INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT**  
Information on patent family members

International application No.  
**PCT/AU01/01659**

This Annex lists the known "A" publication level patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned international search report. The Australian Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

Patent Document Cited in Search Report		Patent Family Member			
WO	200064118	AU	200044809		
US	5862325	AU	21935/97	CA	2247498
		US	6044205	WO	9732251
EP	869652	JP	11031127	US	6061448
		EP	838774	JP	10154110
		US	6119137	US	6192407
WO	99/50778	AU	35486/99	US	6088717
		EP	1068585	US	6269275
END OF ANNEX					